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[Vietnam: Communist attacks tapered off somewhat on 24 February after the heavy action on 22-23 February. Numerous indicators, however, suggest an enemy intention to sustain a period of offensive activity in many areas of the country.

The Communists probably believe that the effort of the last few days is unlikely to have the kind of lasting impact on South Vietnam and the US which they are hoping to achieve.

Action on 24 February: Preliminary reports indicate that Communist-initiated military action was sharply reduced on the second day of the offensive. Attacks on 24 February, however, included several new shellings of allied military installations and South Vietnamese towns. The situation in and immediately around Saigon was reported quiet but several attacks took place in nearby areas of III Corps.

Enemy activity in Bien Hoa Province, to the east of the capital, was centered for the most part in the area of the Long Binh Army Post. Other incidents were reported in Tay Ninh and Hau Nghia provinces, including harassing shellings of the provincial capitals and some scattered district towns.

The largest number of attacks on 24 February occurred in the IV Corps provinces south of Saigon where at least 30 attacks had been reported by 6 AM 24 February Saigon time. None of these attacks, however, involved enemy main force units or full-scale ground assaults on allied strong points or population centers.

Developments on 23 February: The Communist post-Tet offensive was launched with scores of simultaneous hit-and-run attacks during the early **]**

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[Morning hours of 23 February Saigon time. Most of these consisted of brief periods of rocket and mortar fire, sometimes accompanied by light ground probes and terrorist raids. In a few instances, notably in the outlying provinces around Saigon, Communist ground forces up to battalion strength launched limited follow-up ground attacks. There were over 130 attacks in the delta provinces of IV Corps during the night of 22-23 February.

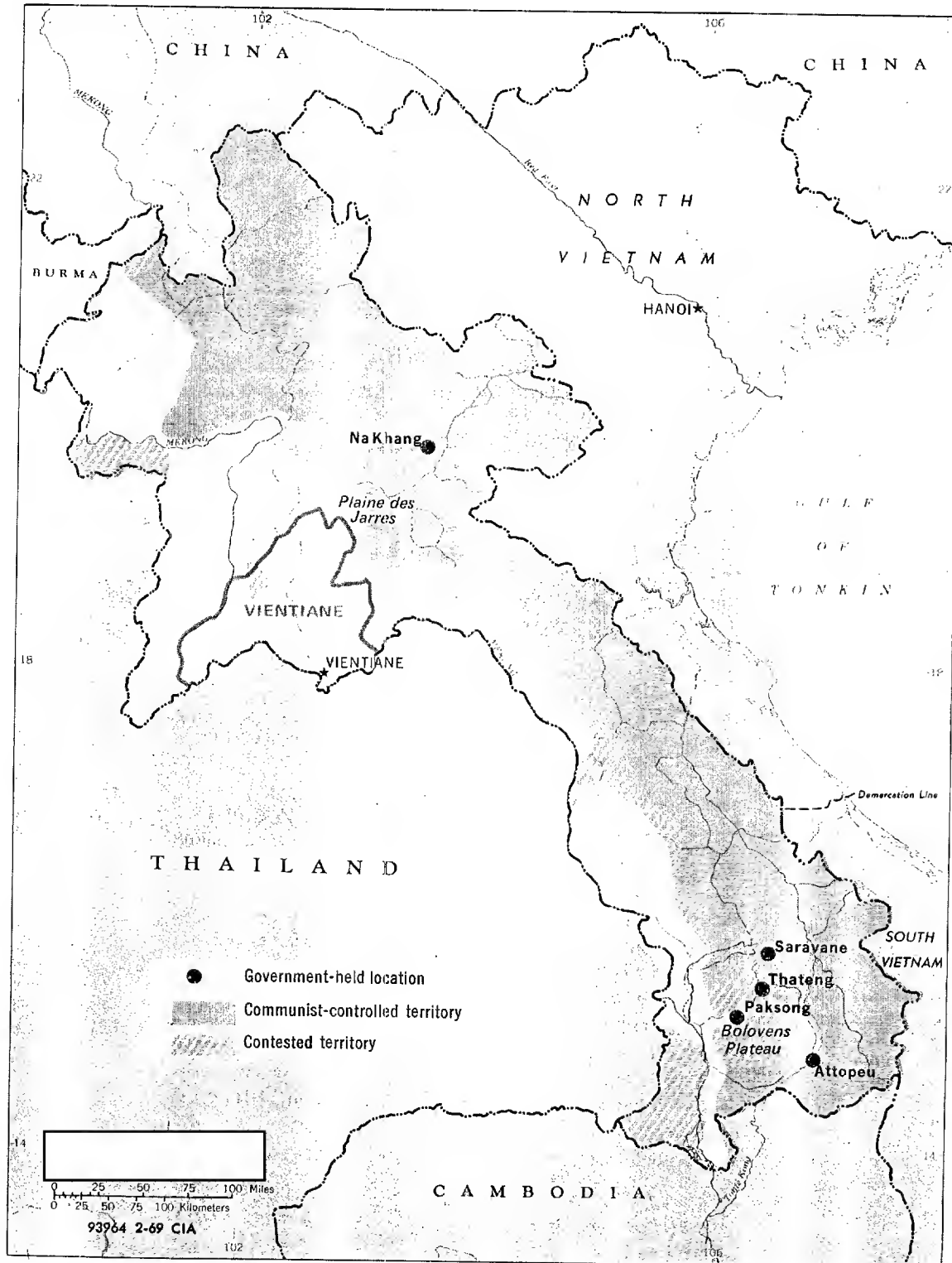
Many population centers throughout the country were struck, including provincial capitals. About a dozen enemy rockets fell on Saigon for the first time since the full US bombing halt last November. The main enemy effort, however, even in urban areas, was against military and government installations, including bases, field positions, special forces camps, and civil and military outposts. Friendly casualties and damage to allied installations appear from first reports to be relatively light.

[(Map)]

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LAOS: Current Situation



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Laos: The Communists are still threatening government positions in widely separated areas of the country, but so far there are few signs that a major push is in the works.

Although they have not chanced any ground assaults in recent weeks, North Vietnamese are still dug in around the government base at Thateng in southern Laos. Government efforts to relieve the pressure against the garrison have met with some early success, although the tactical situation there is basically unchanged. The government defenders, whose numbers have been substantially reduced through casualties and withdrawals, are getting increasingly restive over their plight.

The Communists, meanwhile, are still maintaining pressure against other government positions in the Bolovens Plateau area, including the provincial capitals of Attapeu and Saravane. Recent enemy troop movements suggest that the base at Paksong, some 15 miles southwest of Thateng, may be the Communists' next major target in this area.

A few minor bases in northern Laos have changed hands, otherwise the military situation there continues to be quiet. The anticipated enemy push against the key base at Na Khang has still not materialized, although there are fresh reports of enemy ground reconnaissance around the base's defensive perimeter. In addition, substantial numbers of North Vietnamese troops, some of whom have only been in Laos for a few months and have not yet seen action, are still located in the northeast.

The Pathet Lao, meanwhile, continue to make plans to step up activity in Vientiane Province. Reports of small numbers of advanced Pathet Lao guerrillas filtering into isolated villages and increased terrorism suggest the Communists hope to re-establish their presence in areas north of the capital from which they were driven several years ago. The Communists may also hope to increase terrorism in the capital itself. (Map)

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Berlin: The Communists have initiated a series of last-minute consultations in an effort to induce the West Germans to move their presidential election from Berlin.

East German party boss Ulbricht proposed in a letter delivered on 21 February that Bonn change the venue of the election in return for a lessening of tensions and for the issuance of passes at Easter-time that would permit West Berliners to visit their relatives on the other side of the wall. On 22 February the chief of the West Berlin Communist Party issued a statement saying he was "convinced" that the East Germans would react positively if the election were shifted.

West German Chancellor Kiesinger met twice with Soviet Ambassador Tsarapkin over the weekend. In the second meeting yesterday, Tsarapkin reportedly endorsed Ulbricht's proposal of 21 February and Moscow would probably welcome a compromise acceptable to East Germany. During a talk with West Berlin Mayor Schuetz on 31 January, the Soviet ambassador to East Germany had linked a change in the site of the election with Easter passes.

Despite signs of wavering in Bonn, the pressures for holding to its decision on the site of the presidential election remain strong. Bonn's prestige has become heavily engaged, and with the campaign for the Bundestag election in September already getting under way, Kiesinger can ill afford to appear as yielding to Communist pressure. In Bonn's view, a compromise at this stage must grant more substantial benefits for West Berlin than the East German offer of 21 February provides.

The East Germans may be willing to negotiate with the West Berlin Senat about more permanent pass arrangements to sweeten their part of the deal.

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The Senat met yesterday to consider a reply to Ulbricht, and exploratory talks between the East Germans and the Senat reportedly will be held during the next few days. Serious negotiations are unlikely, however, until Bonn and Moscow have sorted out their positions.

There are no firm indications of major troop moves that might be connected with the joint Soviet/East German exercises around Berlin which Moscow announced would take place in early March. [REDACTED]

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Western Europe: London's strategy in the Anglo-French dispute apparently is to portray Britain as the champion of a Europe united on the principles of the European Communities and with close ties to the US.

The French admit that in the conversation between De Gaulle and British Ambassador Soames in early February they brought up the possibility of bilateral talks with the British on the "political and economic future of Europe." The British have stated publicly, however, that Paris was informed such talks would be possible only if the French understood Britain's rejection of De Gaulle's views on NATO and its continued desire to enter the Communities. British Foreign Secretary Stewart has said further that if General de Gaulle believes there is a better way to European unity than enlargement of the Common Market, he must convince not only the UK but France's five Common Market partners as well. London clearly wants to show that France, not Britain, threatens the balance between large and small states which the Community system is designed to maintain.

The British position could, however, be weakened by harsh criticism expected in Parliament this week of the government's handling of the Anglo-French dispute. There are elements in Britain that have been sympathetic to the idea of a "deal" with De Gaulle. In this regard, suspicions still arise on the Continent over London's aims. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The Germans, meanwhile, have told the British that they still intend to participate in a scheduled

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meeting of the WEU permanent representatives on 26 February unless the French agree to attend a meeting of WEU ministers that Bonn has proposed for 5 March. Paris has previously stated it would not return to WEU sessions unless France's partners accepted its views on the necessity of unanimous consent to the holding of such meetings. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Pakistan: The political situation remains very fluid, and the scramble to assume national leadership has begun.

The enthusiasm generated by President Ayub Khan's decision to step down after presiding over constitutional reforms and new elections appears tempered by the opposition's appreciation that it must now share responsibility with Ayub. Public statements by the major opposition leaders have been moderate in tone, and even Ayub's declared enemies have publicly refrained from gloating.

Former foreign minister Bhutto arrived in East Pakistan yesterday and met with East Pakistan opposition leaders. Asghar Khan, the moderate former air force commander, has proposed formation of a United National Party that apparently would be a coalition of several major parties. He also appears to be making a bid for East Pakistani support.

Ayub still plans to convene a conference to decide on mutually acceptable constitutional changes. The meeting could get under way this week after the popular East Pakistani leader Mujibur Rahman--now unconditionally freed from conspiracy charges--arrives in West Pakistan and has a chance to meet with other opposition leaders. Now that Ayub has removed himself from contention, it may be even more difficult for the splintered opposition to develop a consensus. Although the opposition demands a sovereign parliament, Ayub apparently favors retention of a strong presidential system.

The situation in East Pakistan is still chaotic. Dacca has been celebrating Ayub's promised

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departure and the release of Mujibur Rahman. Destructive violence stemming from separatist sentiments broke out again over the weekend in Dacca and some smaller cities. Now that Ayub as the symbol of West Pakistani authority has been beaten, it seems likely that clashes will occur between moderates and radicals.

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NOTES

Nigeria: Federal leader Gowon, under intense pressure to interdict Biafra's one operating arms and relief supply airstrip, is [] examining several courses, including the possibility of acquiring Soviet surface-to-air missiles from the UAR. Such missiles would have to be operated by either Soviet or UAR personnel, both unlikely possibilities at present. Gowon is expected actively to pursue the acquisition of additional capability against the airlift, such as more aircraft, transport aircraft fitted as "gunships," or antiaircraft guns. []

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Peru: At a rally on 21 February, opposition party leader Haya de la Torre publicly demanded free elections. The rally, one held annually to celebrate the party leader's birthday, went off without incident, although the crowd was somewhat smaller than expected. Haya's speech was generally moderate in tone and obviously designed to avoid provoking the military government. []

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[] students are now planning to step up their opposition to the government. []

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